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SUBJECT: ESTONIAN MEDIA HAS IT STRAIGHT ON HAITI ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 5277

Madam Secretary - I have reviewed reporting in the Estonian media together with my Public Affairs staff and can confirm that the stories and articles about Haiti have been factual and accurate. There has been no Estonian media criticism or distortion of the U.S. effort. The press here has replayed comments from a variety of sources, including officials from other countries (France and Brazil, most notably) that have leveled accusations that the United States is attempting to occupy Haiti, for example. However, no such negative and inaccurate statements have been generated or seconded by the media itself.

Among Estonia's active online media audiences, individuals have voiced their private opinions, some of which have been critical of our engagement in Haiti, ranging from comments that Estonia didn't make such large contributions to Haiti to please the Americans to others that imply the U.S. has ulterior motives in its "so-called" generosity. Although these comments are hardly reflective of the majority of online commentary, we have countered this internet opinion flow with my personal intervention setting the record straight and inviting responses. My staff and I will continue to monitor new media over the coming days and weeks to aggressively point to the facts as needed.

My team and I have also been engaged intensively since the start of the Haiti crisis with the Estonian Government, the Parliament, NGOs and the media to build support for assistance to Haiti and to engage the public on our own efforts. We applauded Estonia's disproportionately high level of assistance in financial and human resources to the victims. Estonia was one of the first EU countries to step forward and has, in fact, greatly increased its level of assistance to nearly USD 400,000, as of January 19, 2010. Part of these funds have paid for five GOE USAR and logistics personnel to be dispatched to assist with recovery efforts. Private Estonians have given USD 45,000 so far, and Tartu, Estonia's second largest city, raised USD 10,000 on its own.

I used an opportunity January 20 with a leading Russian-language television outlet, focusing on the one-year anniversary of the Obama administration taking office and the U.S. record on assistance to Haiti. The target audience is Estonia's Russian-speaking public, which generally tends to be much more critical of both the Estonian and U.S. governments and skeptical of our actions. Our exceptional Haiti efforts and the Administration's tough and successful first year will continue to be my key themes for the next several traditional media and internet engagements. Respectfully, Mike.

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